

## Piano = Life

Written by Gayle Nobel

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I have been taking piano lessons for the last year and a half. When I quit tap dancing, I decided I needed another creative outlet. Gotta keep those neuronal connections in the brain growing. Though dusty and out of tune, my childhood piano stood waiting. When I began lessons, I was pleasantly surprised to find that much of what I had learned as a little girl was not lost.

Piano has been a great outlet for me though I don't practice as often as I should or would like to. However, when I do, an immediate shift seems to take place and I am transformed. Besides being extremely enjoyable, playing the piano pushes me into the present moment.

As I did when I started tap dancing, I vowed I would never do a recital. Well, guess what? There is a mini recital coming up on Friday night at my piano teacher's home and I am playing Singin in the Rain and Canon in D. It is actually just a group of adult students getting together to play for each other. It's supposed to be very informal, but I've experienced some self induced pressure this past week to play those pieces perfectly.

A few days ago, I became aware that I need to play a song at least three times for me to feel fluid and get anywhere close to a flawless performance. I also realized I probably wouldn't have three opportunities to get it "right" (and just what IS right?) on Friday night.

I scheduled an extra piano lesson today and one of the first things my teacher said to me was that the goal was not to play without mistakes but to keep moving forward as fluidly as possible without dwelling on fumbles and stumbles. Keep the music flowing and have fun. Oh yes, fun. I had forgotten about that. She reminded me that there would always be something- a missed note, timing that is off, a lapse in attention. Anything is possible especially if I am a little nervous. And since I am not playing in the piano Olympics, it is okay.

My mental light bulb began to flicker. Now this was some great piano performance wisdom. But doesn't this also apply to much of life? I was practicing to be perfect and it just wasn't working. In fact, the harder I tried to be perfect, the more tense and tangled my fingers became. My teacher reminded me that it's all about having a relaxed attitude and focusing on my own musical enjoyment. The rest would flow from there.

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We may have been talking about playing the piano, but in essence we were also talking about life.

Any thoughts?